

# Foreword

*John Raisian*

In 1998, Tad Taube and I met on several occasions to discuss the quality of schooling provided to America's children, particularly those in low-income situations. Tad, who is President of the Koret Foundation—a philanthropic organization that had recently committed to focus on issues of education in the United States—is also a member of Hoover's Board of Overseers, a member of the Executive Committee of the Board, and former Chairman of the Board's Communications Committee. We both felt strongly that the Hoover Institution could contribute significantly to a productive dialogue on improving American public education.

Thus, the Institution embarked on *The Initiative on American Public Education*, with the overall goal of presenting pertinent facts surrounding the current debate, contributing to the debate as a constructive commentator, and generating new ideas relating to education reform. This is a five-year commitment to the production of research and writing on education reform that citizens of the United States should be considering as a matter of public policy. It is an effort to identify and convey factual information about the state of American education, as well as to generate ideas for change that would enhance the opportunity for our children to gain more knowledge and assemble better skills. It also focuses on the underprivileged, for if we are committed to equal

opportunity in this country, we must begin with equal educational opportunity.

The centerpiece of this initiative was recruiting a task force of educational experts who think about bold reforms yet are well regarded within the education community. The Board of Directors of the Koret Foundation were interested in supporting this effort to the extent of serving as partners toward the advancement of ideas that might move our educational methodology forward. Therefore, they made a founding financial commitment to this *Initiative*, with special interest in the formation of the task force, now known as the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

As Terry Moe describes in the introduction that follows, the Koret Task Force consists of eleven exceptional people who are committed to working together to address education policy in the United States. Each of these people has an aggressive individual agenda for the national dialogue on education issues. The proposition is that, if the Hoover Institution could convene the group, facilitate their working together with common goals and objectives, and disseminate their findings and recommendations, we could all benefit from the outcome.

The Koret Task Force was formally convened in 1999, and an investment in agendas, research, and writings began forthwith. The release of *A Primer on America's Schools*, edited by Koret Task Force member Terry Moe, represents the first of many joint publications in an aggressive multiyear agenda of tasks defined by the group. This volume describes the landscape we face in America concerning American education. Follow-on volumes will delve deeper into ideas for reform.

Many individuals have stepped forward to support this *Initiative*, many of whom are mentioned on the acknowledgement page. We could not have launched this ambitious effort without this significant support. I wish to thank Tad Taube for his help in crafting the design and intellectual foundation for the *Initiative*. And I would like to thank the Koret Foundation for their significant support allowing us to launch the *Initiative* and thus to demonstrate to others what can be achieved. We have strived to attract investors

to the project and continue to recruit support that is crucial to the effort. The Koret Foundation provided the venture capital that allowed us the opportunity to demonstrate the founding concept. Let the returns to this concept commence!

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